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SUCCESS IN MEXICO REQUIRES A MILITARY SOLUTION

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

Success in Mexico Requires a Military Solution

Violence caused by Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) has increased in Mexico in recent years, calling into question the stability of the state of Mexico. In an attempt to get security under control, the Government of Mexico has relied on the military to supplement, and in most cases replace, police forces at the federal, state, and local levels in order to combat DTOs. While some have criticized President Calderon for his strategy of using the military in a law enforcement role, the military is the only Mexican institution that can achieve the long-term security goals Mexico needs in order to reestablish the rule of law. The trust, effectiveness, and capabilities that the military brings to the fight can be the impetus for change, enhancing necessary reforms to Mexican law enforcement and creating a viable and long-lasting solution.

Introduction

President Calderon, upon entering office on December 1, 2006, declared war on narco-trafficking, looking to institute law and order as his administration's principal policy.¹ Viewing the threat of organized crime as a national security threat, he deployed 45,000 troops throughout Mexico with the purpose of reinforcing, but in many cases, supplanting federal, state and municipal police in key areas.² Some have criticized the Government of Mexico (GOM) for its overt use of the Mexican military to try to solve the security problem while others believe that with relatively limited feasible options, the military was the only option available. However, President Calderon may have recognized the benefit of militarizing law enforcement. Mexico's use of the military as the primary law enforcement tool against Drug Trafficking Organizations (DTOs) is the only way Mexico can achieve the long term security goals it needs in order to reestablish the rule of law. The military can leverage effectiveness and capabilities against DTOs, something civilian law enforcement institutions do not possess and which inhibit their ability to effectively combat DTOs. The severe weakness of law enforcement is only one of many concerns in an ill-structured problem and the military is the only institution that can enable the GOM to set the conditions for regaining stability and reestablishing the rule of law.

Background

The Mexican Military has long been an integral part of the Mexican government, based on the special relationship evolving out of the Mexican revolution. The military had been the instrument for securing victory but through the early post-revolution years, reforms were made to keep the military apolitical. Over time, the relationship developed into the "civil-military pact," an unspoken agreement whereby the military gave unconditional loyalty to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in exchange for respect for the autonomy of the military.³ In essence,

the military operated freely without oversight from the administration due to its “loyalty, discipline, and subordination,” but also ensured that the PRI stayed in power.⁴

The Mexican Army is headed by a four-star General who is the Secretary of National Defense (SEDENA). There is no civilian leadership heading the service components, nor a civilian Minister or Secretary of Defense, and SEDENA reports directly to the president as a cabinet member. The force strength of the Army has risen dramatically since the early 1990s. Current strength of the Army is over 212,000 active-duty and over 87,000 in the reserves, dwarfing the Navy and Air Force at 58,000 and 12,000 respectively.⁵ The Army also includes 60,000 conscripts that serve for one year and are drafted by lottery.⁶ The Army is divided up among 46 military zones within 12 military regions.⁷

The Mexican Army’s five stated missions are: Defend integrity, independence and sovereignty of the nation; guarantee interior security; provide relief to the civil population in case of public need; perform civic actions and public works aimed at the progress of the country; and in case of disaster, help keep order and provide relief, as well as reconstruct the affected zone.⁸ Close proximity to the United States has seemingly left national security issues as non-factors. It is the second mission area, to guarantee interior security, which has been the focus of Mexican military efforts, especially with the security issues caused by DTOs. Some of those tasks have included setting up checkpoints, eradicating marijuana and opium fields, interdicting drug shipments, and apprehending drug traffickers.⁹

The structure and organization of Mexican police forces is complicated, especially after police agencies at the federal level have been combined, renamed, and restructured over the last 12 years. Mexico is divided into 31 states and one federal district (Mexico City) with federal, state, and municipal police holding jurisdictions in each. They are further divided by function,

either preventive, judicial (investigative), or transit police.¹⁰ In addition to the federal and state police forces, there are more than 1,600 police departments at the local level.¹¹ Federal police report to the Secretariat of Public Security (SSP) while state police report to their individual state governments and municipal police to the city's mayor or council. Each level of law enforcement also has different statute jurisdictions. For instance, federal jurisdiction claims the transportation and sale of drugs and guns but crimes like homicide, assault, and robbery are under the jurisdiction of state and municipal police forces.¹² Additionally, municipal police have jurisdiction for enforcing municipal laws.¹³

Mexican police forces have an overwhelming number. Estimations at each level show Mexico having approximately 24,000 at the federal level, 197,000 at the state level, and 146,000 at the municipal level.¹⁴ These numbers put the ratio of police to citizen well above the average. There are 351 police per 100,000 citizens (299 per 100,000 excluding federal police), as compared to a United Nations average of 255 per 100,000 and recommended 280 per 100,000.¹⁵

Preventive type police make up the majority of police in Mexico and are the traditionally thought of police, ones that maintain public order and prevent crime by patrolling and acting as "first responders" to incidents.¹⁶ Judicial police (now known as ministerial police at the federal level) are responsible for investigating crimes and executing arrest warrants for the state/federal Attorney General's office to prosecute crimes.¹⁷ All three levels have preventive police however only the federal and state have judicial police. The level of efficiency, training, and equipment varies within each police force at the various state and municipal levels and largely depends on the size of the police force.¹⁸ All of this has only increased the complexity in trying to use civil police forces in solving the problems of organized crime in Mexico.

Police Ineffectiveness

The ineffectiveness of the police forces comes from the nature of the institution. Despite large numbers, Mexican police forces are ineffective against DTOs and organized crime because of systemic problems of corruption, a lack of trust and faith in it by the Mexican public, and because of the bureaucracy of the institutions. It is precisely this ineffectiveness that caused President Calderon to utilize the army en masse and why the military will be required to play a long-term role.

Corruption is a seminal factor in the ineffectiveness of the police forces in combatting DTOs. It is an institutional factor in ensuring that not only will the police fail at its duty of public service but that it will also become a hindrance to society at large.¹⁹ It weakens the criminal justice system institutions (police, judicial, penitentiary) that help maintain the rule of law. With corruption as rampant as it is, DTOs have been allowed an opportunity to embed themselves within communities without resistance. Poorly paid police accept money from traffickers creating networks of corrupted police forces at the state and municipal police levels that result in the police working for the DTOs to provide protection.²⁰ Compounding the problem is ineffectual judicial police who do not have the capability or motivation to investigate and prosecute crimes of the DTOs. Weakened by corruption, only 1-2% of arrests have a chance of resulting in a conviction where time will be served and a conviction does not mean the end of the story either.²¹ The weakness of the prison system has also allowed opportunities for the traffickers to continue to run operations from prison.²²

Compounding the problem is the extent of corruption throughout the system. According to the National Public Security System, in 2007, 1,400 police at the federal and state level were given “reliability tests” which included polygraphs and drug testing and 60% failed.²³ The cycle

persists because the cartels generate large sums of cash that are then used to further corrupt law enforcement and public officials to either protect or ignore cartel activities.²⁴ This cyclic problem of corruption and inefficiency has even been recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) as representing an impediment to public safety. The UNHCHR encouraged the GOM to “promote the progressive and verifiable substitution of the armed forces in public safety duties.”²⁵ The use of the military is the only thing that has a chance of breaking the cycle of corruption that has shielded the cartels and prohibited investigation and prosecution of cartel members.

According to a survey in August 2011, the top five concerns for Mexicans were: crime, cartel related violence, illegal drugs, the economy, and corruption.²⁶ The majority of the Mexican population lacks faith in the police and judicial systems to be able to solve any of these problems because of persistent abuse and corruption. A study in Mexico City found that 57.1% of respondents who had contact with the police had received some form of abuse or mistreatment, which also included bribes, threats, or general insults.²⁷ Furthermore, it is estimated that 75% of crimes go unreported because of the perception of the futility of reporting crimes, that nothing will come of it.²⁸ And there is good reason for it. Another study found that of the 22% who had reported a crime, only 15% of these resulted in an open case file.²⁹

On the other hand, trust in the Mexican military is very high and it lends to the credibility of the military being part of the solution to public security. The military is continually ranked in the top three of Mexican institutions that are perceived favorably or where people have high confidence in the institution; the Roman Catholic Church remains the top institution.³⁰ Trust in the military also ranks high in surveys of western hemisphere countries with Mexico at 70.8% behind only Canada (79.3%) and the United States (74.8%).³¹ This trust is based in part on the

historical support of the military to the institution of the revolutionary ideals that created individual rights and social justice.³² In an August, 2011 survey, 83% of Mexican respondents had a favorable view of the Mexican military in its efforts against crime.³³ The citizenry has a faith in the military to be able to solve the problem which will provide necessary backing in the GOM's use of the military to dismantle DTOs.

In comparison of perceptions about what the primary mission of the Mexican military should be, 45% think it should be fighting crime and the DTOs compared to 16% who felt it should be defending national sovereignty.³⁴ In addition, 86.5% of Mexican society sees the military as an entity of discipline and order, and favors the use of force by the Mexican military as a viable solution.³⁵ The lack of trust in police forces and high confidence in the military has also been apparent to government officials at all levels. Military personnel have been recruited to lead civilian law enforcement agencies or to provide personnel to fill them. In the mid-1990s military officers were in command of the state police forces in more than half of the 32 Mexican states.³⁶ Believing the military to be less vulnerable to corruption and more capable against DTOs, President Calderon has encouraged the assignment of retired and active duty military officers to civilian posts.³⁷ Deployments also mean soldiers are not "local" and are less susceptible to cartel influence coming from personal security threats or that of their family.

Problems of corruption and trust only compound the other realities that make the police forces ineffective. The structure and mandates of the different levels of police incapacitate the police not only against DTOs but also in pursuing normal criminal activities. Preventive police make up the vast majority of police forces but are not legally able to take crime reports from citizens, conduct criminal investigations, or preserve crime scenes and evidence.³⁸ Additionally, police forces suffer from problems collecting intelligence and conducting investigations which

leads to an inability to prosecute and convict.³⁹ There has also been a slow, gradual transfer of the core functions away from the local preventive police to the state and federal judicial police.⁴⁰

Effective Military Capabilities

The military has capabilities that out-match those of the police forces in the fight against DTOs. The military has advantages in force, both in maneuver and mass, as well as in structure and organization, one that is more conducive to achieving unity of command, unity of effort, interoperability, and oversight.

In recent years the cartels have been able to apply techniques and equipment which exceed the capabilities of police forces, one where maneuver and mass favor a military response. Cartels have started to trend toward military tactics, evidenced in DTOs using infantry squad tactics against Mexican army patrols.⁴¹ Increased use of military tactics is probably due to DTOs sometimes employing former military personnel or in the case of the Zetas, where the entire organization is comprised of deserters from the Army Special Forces (GAFE).⁴² The Zetas, and other DTOs who employ military tactics, have a capability to inflict violence far beyond the level the police can handle because of their military training, weapons, intelligence and communications capabilities.⁴³ The cartels have not hesitated in using that violence against any and all who stand in their way, including law enforcement agencies. When looking at sheer numbers that are employed by the DTOs, estimated at 100,000 or more, only the Mexican Army is able to provide comparable mass to counter them when questionable state and local authorities are taken out of the fight.⁴⁴ The other issue revolves around firepower.

Cartels are outgunning the police. According to an Los Angeles Times article, “traffickers have escalated their arms race, acquiring military-grade weapons, including hand grenades, grenade launchers, armor-piercing munitions and antitank rockets with firepower far

beyond the assault rifles and pistols that have dominated their arsenals.⁴⁵ Some of the hardware the cartels are now fielding include automatic rifles like the AK-47 and AR-15, grenades, light anti-tank weapons, .50 caliber Barrett sniper rifles, and explosives used to make Improvised Explosive Devices.⁴⁶ Even in normal circumstances police are not normally provided the minimum equipment necessary to properly do their job and more often than not, they are required to provide for themselves to include their weapons, transportation, and body armor.⁴⁷ Police, while they may be armed with semi-automatic rifles that look good, there is no comparison to the weapons being used by the cartels.⁴⁸ With the current security problem in Mexico being equated to an insurgency in some circles, the police cannot provide the required security when matched against DTO firepower.

Successful counterinsurgency efforts, according to Kalev Sepp, also require a strong executive authority.⁴⁹ Strong executive authority has been demonstrated through the leadership of President Calderon but the leadership is only as strong as the unity of command below it. This is where military leadership in charge of the anti-drug efforts, in conjunction with the military structure and organization, can be beneficial in fighting DTOs. This would be achieved through the aforementioned discipline, subordination, and loyalty, and it would be necessary because of the nature and depth of reforms required of the public institutions.

There has already been clear recognition of the benefits provided by placing professional military officers in key positions. Some efforts have been made to place military officers in charge, both active duty and retired, recognizing that in conjunction with reforms, militarization has a strong emphasis on discipline and hierarchy.⁵⁰ Under the Fox Administration, a Brigadier General was appointed as the Attorney General (PGR) and SEDENA was given the responsibility for investigating the leadership structures of the DTOs.⁵¹ President Calderon has

continued the progression of military involvement, most notably through his employment of the military as the implementers of his national security policy to dismantle DTOs.⁵² SEDENA was also given responsibility for aerial drug eradication in 2007 from the PGR as well as creating a special support force, an entirely military force to fight organized crime and that reports directly to his office.⁵³

Although the size of federal police forces had doubled to a force of over 37,000 from 2001-2009, President Calderon deployed 45,000 troops during his first two years in office and in 2009 the army had 48,750 troops assigned to the drug mission.⁵⁴ Given that the military has the preponderance of forces and responsibility, military command will be necessary to ensure subordination by civilian police agencies. Previous deployments implemented by the SSP and PGR, but commanded by the military at the tactical level, received friction from federal, state, and local agencies.⁵⁵ Incidents have shown federal police refusing to adhere to agreed upon command structures and because of anger over it, they have sometimes alerted drug traffickers to impending operations.⁵⁶ Creating a structure with the military being the supported agency would not only make it clear as to who was in charge but also provide for better effectiveness with centralized planning and decentralized execution. Military regional and zone commanders would be provided the leeway to plan and execute “high impact” operations in their area of operations.⁵⁷

A secondary effect of unity of command would be better unity of effort. Interagency coordination is always difficult. Political interests throughout the varying involved agencies and at the different levels of government creates friction. The loss of single party rule by the PRI has created a situation where each state’s leadership may not necessarily fall in line with the efforts at the federal level. Detrimental effects to operational planning have been caused by a “lack of

coordination and political infighting between political parties, political leaders, and government agencies” according to Eric Olson.⁵⁸ Aside from military chain of command, military professional contact has already proven a benefit to unity of effort and efforts in Tijuana provide a good model for instituting military control. Success was achieved because there was a good relationship between the army and police because the chief of police and head of public security were both former military officers.⁵⁹ The “Tijuana Model” showed how a former Army Zone Commander assisted in the interagency coordination between the federal, state, and military agencies to plan and conduct operations against DTOs in that zone.⁶⁰

With SEDENA leading the intelligence efforts, unity of effort would be gained because the operational arm is connected to the intelligence agency.⁶¹ President Calderon has expressed negative comments concerning the police intelligence system, blaming a lack of intelligence sharing on organizational divisions and rivalry created among the different agencies.⁶² With the military lead, intelligence sharing is more viable between the analysts and the operators, negating the lack of trust between police agencies, as well as on the system as whole. This also increases unity of effort and coordination between Mexico and the United States intelligence apparatuses by providing a conduit for United States intelligence agencies to share intelligence about DTOs.

Military leadership of public security might also be able to provide better oversight and accountability. Corruption and subversion of state institutions are necessary for the cartels to continue to operate; they need to be able to influence police, prosecutors, customs agents, etc.⁶³ Centralization at the federal level was aimed to keep out DTO infiltration; however, the federal police and judicial forces have shown to be just as susceptible. The federal police agencies have been restructured twice over the last 12 years in an attempt to root out and prevent corruptibility of federal agents. In 2007, 284 Federal Preventive Police, most senior officers of the Federal

Investigations Agency and the police commanders in each of the 32 states were relieved by President Calderon.⁶⁴ And in 2010 more than 3,000 federal police officers were fired for corruption.⁶⁵

The Military Sets the Conditions

The Calderon strategy recognizes that the problem of security will necessitate reforms on many different levels and through various civilian agencies. Mexico's Comprehensive Strategy for Preventing and Combatting Crime sets courses of action in seven areas: 1) alignment of government structures and competencies against crime, 2) crime prevention and social involvement, 3) institutional development, 4) the penitentiary system, 5) tackling corrupt practices, 6) technology (Platform Mexico), and 7) federal police performance indications in coordination with civil society.⁶⁶ These reforms are to address chronic institutional problems that will lead to long-term security and stability. The military providing security sets the conditions necessary for these reforms to be effective; it is an enabler to provide both security and time.

Mexico faces what some have called a networked criminal insurgency, not one that seeks to overthrow or subvert the Mexican government but which seeks only to maintain and enhance its profitability and could just as easily destabilize the Mexican government.⁶⁷ While a criminal insurgency in Mexico may differ from political insurgencies, security of the population is still vital. It permits effective long term reforms which lays the foundation for the eventual transition back to law enforcement.⁶⁸ An institution that is as broken as Mexican law enforcement cannot simultaneously provide security while also attempting to go through a major overhaul.

President Calderon's approach toward police reform is top-down, having stated that he wanted to give to the people at the end of his presidency a "new and cleaner police corps at the

federal level.”⁶⁹ Once reforms have been instituted and proven to be effective at the federal level, then approaches at the lower levels may have a chance of success and a transfer to law enforcement possible. However this is problematic when Federal Police personnel are quitting as fast as they join. Between 2007 and 2010, over 6,000 officers who passed the entrance exam became inactive, over 400 were killed and 5,890 quit.⁷⁰ One can only assume that personal security may have contributed to the reason so many quit.

Security also entails protection for law enforcement at the municipal and state levels in order for them to be able to do their job. Municipal police in particular are more vulnerable. Described as “Plata o plomo” (silver or lead), it is the choice police usually face from DTOs: either take the bribe to help the cartels or receive a bullet for your non-cooperation.⁷¹ Municipal police live in the community with their families and when confronted with a choice to do the right thing or risk harm to themselves or their family, they will not prioritize their decisions to the interests of the state.⁷²

Success of the strategy will not happen overnight. John Bailey believes it could take decades to succeed with the scope of institutional reforms needed to restore the police and judicial systems, build an intelligence system, and integrate the security framework from the national down to the local level.⁷³ The military must be able to hold ground while the reestablishment of the rule of law is started with reforms of agencies.⁷⁴ The reforms needed will take time because they are not only structural problems but also institutional culture problems. Reliability tests imposed upon current and future police officers may weed out “bad apples” but it does not fix the root cause. Corruption starts as early as basic training at the academy and continues well into their employment on the force, one in which a vicious cycle ensues; they

have an “apparent sense of the inevitability of corruption, hence their failure to question it and their ultimate acquiescence” according to Elena Azaola.⁷⁵

Judicial and penal system reforms will also take time to implement. Mexico’s constitutional reforms in 2008 provided for a move from an inquisitorial system to an adversarial one with public hearings.⁷⁶ This new system is a major institutional change from the previous system. President Calderon set the deadline for these judicial reforms to be completed by 2016 however with the immense change that is required and the number of courts affected (519 at the federal level alone), it is uncertain whether the changes will be implemented by then let alone efficient enough to function.⁷⁷

Militarization of Law Enforcement is Not the Answer

Opponents of the military getting involved in public security are many, believing involving the military will do more harm than good. The biggest argument is that militarization breeds human rights and civil rights abuses because the military skill sets and training are not congruent with law enforcement or public security skill sets.⁷⁸

Critics point to a rise in human rights violations by the military since 2006 as a failure of the military to provide a level of basic security to the people they’re supposed to protect. Many of these abuses are reported to the National Commission on Human Rights (CNDH), a public institution with full autonomy and budgetary management, with the purpose to receive, hear, and investigate alleged human rights violations.⁷⁹ The CNDH reported a rise in human rights complaints against the military from 182 in 2006 to 1,791 in 2009 and a total of 3,981 complaints were received by SEDENA between 2006 and 2010.⁸⁰ According to the CNDH, complaints received entailed “torture, arbitrary arrest, unlawful entry, illegal searches, cruel or degrading treatment, robbery, illegal detention, threats, forced disappearance, intimidation,

damage to private property and violations against liberty and due process rights.”⁸¹ However, a closer look at the numbers revealed that not all complaints were human rights violations. Of the complaints received between 2006 and 2010, 58% were not related to human rights violations and of the 73 actual recommendations by CNDH forwarded to SEDENA, only 32 were considered legitimate human rights violations but were all accepted nonetheless.⁸²

It should be noted that police are also guilty of these same crimes. The 2010 U.S. State Department Report on Human Rights Abuses reported incidents of kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and rape among other crimes perpetrated by federal, state, and municipal police officers.⁸³ It is not necessarily a problem with the military but one concerning transparency and the accountability mechanisms to keep a security force honest. For its part, the military has tried to address these issues. Accountability is established through the CNDH and the receptiveness of SEDENA to receive those complaints. The military has also been proactive in providing training programs, to officers and enlisted alike, to address human rights concerns and have invited human rights experts to military schools.⁸⁴

Conclusion

The problems in Mexico will not be solved by the military alone. The nature of the ill-structured problem requires a solution that is broad-based. However, only the military can provide the security necessary to be able to achieve criminal justice system reforms and other socio-economic measures that will return stability and the rule of law to Mexico. Eventually the responsibility of public security will be transferred to a dedicated Mexican law enforcement agency but before that happens, the law enforcement community will need to be able to match the military’s level of trust, effectiveness, and capabilities to take on violent DTOs, and procedural effectiveness that guarantees unity of effort. The issue is how to leverage the benefits

of the Mexican military, which is key to providing security now, and transforming that into a viable and long lasting law enforcement solution. The government of Mexico will need to develop a plan that takes advantage of the best that the military has offered in the war against DTOs.

Recommendations

The military can provide the catalyst for making necessary changes which focus on building a robust and effective police force to combat DTOs. In the short term, the GOM should provide standardized law enforcement training to the Mexican Army in order to meet the needs of the operational environment today. Such training would only enhance the effectiveness of providing public security, having additional skill sets that focus on law enforcement. As the United States has seen in Iraq and Afghanistan, the modern military must adapt and transform. Conventional warfare troops may require a transition to a softer approach to gain stability. It would alleviate concerns and fears of human rights organizations that assert the military is not capable of providing public security because of lack of training. It would also provide a direct conduit where the United States could engage Mexico by providing counter-narcotics law enforcement training through either the Federal Bureau of Investigation or Drug Enforcement Agency.

Success with law enforcement training for the military could also lead to the transition of a portion of the military to a full time role in a national police force, presumably a newly established and designated paramilitary police force. While the solution template that worked in Colombia in tackling DTOs and insurgency shouldn't be automatically applied, one takeaway from Plan Colombia is how Colombia was able to develop an effective and efficient paramilitary force capable of matching DTO capabilities. The Colombian national police combines the

characteristics of both the army and the police, operating more like an army light infantry unit but still having the power to collect evidence.⁸⁵

Mexico should draw personnel from the military to form the heart of this force vice reforming the Federal Police due to inherent trust and corruption concerns. The Mexican army does not need a force of over 200,000 personnel to accomplish their designated missions. Mexico is not threatened by invasion, it does not send troops overseas to protect national interests, and with a pluralistic democracy, there is no longer a political need to maintain such a large army. A national paramilitary force with a military history, structure and organization would take the best of the military and place it in full time law enforcement. It would also make integration between it and the Mexican army easier if large scale operations required a combined effort. Mexican sensitivities may make it difficult for the United States to provide direct training to this new force but it could be achieved through a surrogate, Colombia. Thousands of Mexican police and soldiers have already been trained in Colombia and putting a Colombian face on the training garners more support at home. The United States could still have a direct impact in training a viable and effective Mexican force to counter the DTO threat considering the amount of support the United States provides to Colombia through training, equipment, and financing.

Mexico will still require fixes to law enforcement below the federal level, solutions that can keep state and local police from being co-opted by criminal elements. The two components for this type of change should be jurisdiction and standardization. To reduce influence of DTOs on state and local officials, any crime related to organized crime and the DTOs should be pursued and investigated at the federal level, ideally by the Federal police and the national paramilitary force. Keeping state and local police quarantined from drug-related crime might provide immunity from DTO influence since they would have no complicity in the legal system

against the DTOs. Once pressure on them has been reduced, it may be possible for them to start reforming and improving.

Aside from better pay, equipment, and working conditions, law enforcement at the state and local levels need standardization of procedures and training. Success has been shown in Chihuahua City where the municipal police department earned accreditation from the U.S.-based Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). CALEA requires police departments meet 459 standards covering accepted practices recognized by law enforcement professionals and experts to receive accreditation.⁸⁶ The results in Chihuahua City were increased professionalization and one where the police had a basis of knowledge to fall back on vice on personal judgment which may have been tainted in the past.⁸⁷

President Calderon had proposed an initiative to disband the state and local police forces and create a national police force citing easier interagency coordination, unity of command, and easier reform.⁸⁸ That initiative did not pass but a middle of the road solution would be to disband municipal police departments to leave state police responsible for policing the municipalities. This would reduce the number of police forces in Mexico from over 1,600 down to 32 (at the state level) which would simplify the process of standardization and training. A federally mandated police accreditation program, perhaps based on the CALEA accreditation, could require states to receive accreditation for their state police forces and tie it to federal funding that provides for state training and equipment. This training for accreditation should start at the police academies early in a cadet's career with a federally mandated curriculum to ensure standardized training across the states. Keeping state police forces vice just making a national police force would guarantee state interests were being met, would better adapt with

local conditions and operating environments, and keep federal forces from having to perform duties associated with petty crimes or traffic violations.

NOTES

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